

MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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MOUNT PROSPECT IN 1912

In 1912, as the Titanic sailed, sank and captured the imagination of the world, Mount Prospect was a sleepy town that was just beginning to wake up. Just sixty-five years after its first settlers, the little town of about 250 was taking step to build up civic, business and religious institutions that would figuratively—and in a few short years, literally—put it on the map. In essence, they were building a community. The Mount Prospect Improvement Association had been formed in 1911. This



(Above) An identified family appears on Busse Avenue in this 1912 image. In the background can be seen the original Busse Buick and the Mount Prospect State Bank Buildings. (Below, left) Dietrich and Lena Friedrichs pose in front of their home with new daughter Bessie in 1912.



organization of leading Mount Prospect "citizens" (the community existed in name only), ensured that the necessary and proper infrastructure was being put into place to grow the small railroad town and make it attractive to outsiders.

An important event that would have lasting ramifications on the structure of the Village was the formation in 1912 of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Its 17

charter members established the new church on July 7, 1912 at the Central School building, which was known then simply as "Community Hall" The church remained there just a few months until they moved into their new sanctuary in early 1913. Until then, the spiritual hub and center of the community had been St. John Lutheran

(SEE "1912", PG. 3)

FROM THE ARCHIVES...

MOUNT PROSPECT HERALD
 JUNE 1, 1951
 "THE REMINICES OF
 WILLIAM BUSSE"

**"I DO NOT WANT
 TO LIVE TOO
 CLOSE-IN."**

**-DIETRICH "DICK"
 FRIEDRICHS, TO
 WILLIAM BUSSE
 ON HIS SELECTION OF
 A LOT AT 101 S.
 MAPLE ST., NOW THE
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S
 MUSEUM CAMPUS.**

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Greg Peerbolte
Executive Director

***THE
'BIGGER'
STORIES
ALSO HAVE
AN EFFECT
ON LOCAL
HISTORY...***

FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

As the Society gears for its upcoming “An Evening Aboard The Titanic” Event on April 14th (exactly 100 years from the ship’s last full day at sea, for those keeping notes), I am frequently getting asked what exactly has the *Titanic* to do with the history of Mount Prospect.

Sometimes history unfolds in a dramatic fashion that rivals our greatest works of theatre. The *Titanic* is one of those stories. In this way, the “bigger” stories always have an effect on local history and personal memory. Around the time of 1912, transition was all around us. The construction of the *Titanic* was a manifestation of the growth and optimism of the period. Though on a smaller

scale and with much less arrogance, citizens of Mount Prospect, like the designers of the ship, had a notion of building things “bigger and better”, and using newly found scientific breakthroughs and applied technology to speed towards modernity. It seemed our technology could master nature itself. As the “unsinkable” masterpiece of engineering plunged to the bottom of the Atlantic, this optimism took a huge hit, and we were once again forced to question our technological superiority in the face of nature’s power.

The importance of the effect the *Titanic* had on contemporary society is evident even in our own collection. Among the earliest catalogued items in the Society’s records is a 1912 copy

of the book *The Sinking of the Titanic and Great Sea Disasters*. The book promises the reader “thrilling stories of survivors with photographs & sketches.” After some reflection, I realized that this book tells us that we aren’t much different today. We have a desire to know the facts surrounding a tragedy, perhaps in an effort to reason why it happened at all, before we have all the information. (One glaring example of this is the book’s statement of the death toll of 1,635 which has since been conclusively placed at 1,517). While we are fascinated by tragedy, in the face of it, we hope and root for the survivors. So, in many ways, the story of the *Titanic* is yet another story about us, who we are, and who we aspire to be.

FROM THE COLLECTION:



This serene image of the Mount Prospect train depot from around 1912 came to the Society from Joe Pierson, who works with the archives of the Chicago & North Western Historical Society. Joe was kind to forward these and other images which are not part of our current archives to our organization. Note that Emerson Street is little more than a dirt trail, and Prospect Avenue (which at that time was known as Railroad Avenue) is completely undeveloped.

1912, CON'T FROM PAGE 1

Church, established in 1848. Today, the distance between St. Paul, on the corner of Busse and Elm Streets, and St. John on Linneman Road, seems minimal. However, in the days before automobiles and paved roads, a trip from one to the other would have been difficult, especially during the brutal northern Illinois winters. It was reported that the creation of a separate church caused much tension between the German settlers and their first-generation American children. One early resident recalled that his father had advised him to never move out of view of St. John's spire.

Several businesses would form a strong economic backbone to the community were established in 1912. The most prominent being Commissioner William Busse's Buick Dealership. Busse's interest in automobiles would have other ramifications on the future of the community. As County Commissioner he was an early

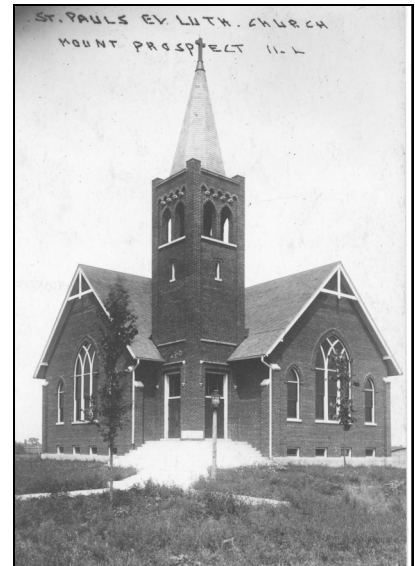


St. John's Lutheran School, Class of 1912

advocate of paved roads. He lent his support to Governor Lennington Small's legislative efforts to make Illinois the state in the Union with the most miles of paved roads in the 1920s. He was also personally responsible, along with Arlington Heights Mayor Al Volz, for the construction of Northwest Highway and all of the politics therein. Volz and Busse met in grade school and forged a friendship that would last over 75 years.

Transition was a constant theme in the days of 1912 in Mount Prospect, and all over the country. As the *Titanic* slipped beneath the waves, it seemed

so, too, were many aspects of the rigid Victorian culture. In a few short years, the World would be flung into a war of unimaginable size, scale and carnage, while the United States would launch towards unrivaled superpower status in what later would be known as The American Century.



St. Paul Lutheran Church Building, NE Corner of Busse & Elm Sts. Constructed 1913, Razed 1960

GROWING UP IN MOUNT PROSPECT: THE EXHIBIT



Pictured here is Mrs. Mary Joern in her brand new kitchen. The Joerns' Mount Prospect home was featured as the Chicago Tribune's featured "Home of the Week" in the 1950s.

Want to learn more about how Mount Prospect became the Village it is today? The Mount Prospect Historical Society presents its newest exhibit, "Growing Up in Mount Prospect". Come learn about the population boom in the 1950s and 1960s, and the changes that led Mount Prospect to become more than its German settlers had ever imagined. Learn about the housing boom, the expansion and creation of new schools, and the construction of Randhurst Shopping Center. The exhibit also includes artifacts from President Richard M. Nixon's visits to Mount Prospect in 1968 and 1970. The exhibit is currently available for public view. A suggested admission of \$2 per person to help offset the cost of supplies is requested.



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A CENTURY LATER, THE "TITANIC" SAILS AGAIN, SATURDAY APRIL 14TH



The RMS *Titanic* sits elegantly at Southampton Dock shortly before making her fateful maiden voyage

This image is considered to be in the public domain

Join us as we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the *Titanic's* maiden voyage with food, song and history on Saturday, April 14th at Rob Roy Country Club, 505 E. Camp MacDonald Road, Prospect Heights, from 6 to 11 pm.

Choose from two dining options inspired by the voyage: For \$75, dine at the "Captain's Table" where you will rub elbows with the High Seas Victorian elite, including Captain Edward "E.J." Smith and the "Unsinkable" Miss Molly Brown. You will be served an exquisite French menu of tender boneless beef short ribs inspired by surviving First Class menus, prepared by "Ship's Chef" Dave Esau of our very own Dave's Specialty Foods.

For a more relaxed evening, "Steerage" tickets are available for \$25. The menu will feature a hearty buffet of Corned Beef and Cabbage or Turkey Shepherd's Pie.

All passengers will enjoy an evening of Titanic-related trivia, a cash bar complete with period cocktails, and the period and pub music of "Merry Measure," a Chicago-based Irish Folk Trio.

All proceeds from this event will benefit the Mount Prospect Historical Society's operating fund. Tickets can be ordered online at the Society's website or you can make arrangements by phone - (847) 392-9006. **No tickets will be sold at the gangplank!**